



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 27, 2006

For Information Contact Public Affairs
WYN HORNBuckle
Telephone: (602) 514-7625
Cell: (602) 525-2681

BORDER OFFICIAL PLEADS GUILTY TO DRUG CHARGES

TUCSON, Ariz.— Fernando Arango, 52, of Rio Rico, Ariz., an officer with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, pleaded guilty on October 25, 2006, to Attempting to Possess with Intent to Distribute Cocaine. Arango was arrested by the FBI and OPR on Sunday, October 2, 2005 and has been in custody since that date. His sentencing is scheduled before U.S. District Court Judge Cindy Jorgenson on January 11, 2007.

U.S. Attorney Paul K. Charlton stated that “The sentencing of one corrupt individual shouldn’t tarnish the image of thousands of hard working federal agents working our border and throughout Arizona. But it should remind us to remain vigilant in our efforts to rid our border security system of corruption.”

“CBP does not tolerate corruption on the part of its personnel. Although the vast majority of CBP front-line officers are law enforcement professionals of the highest integrity, the few that are not will face very serious consequences, including criminal prosecution,” said W. Ralph Basham, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner.

In his change of plea, Arango admitted on October 2, 2005, he was paid \$50,000 in U.S. currency for passing a recreational vehicle through the Mariposa Port of Entry checkpoint on October 1, which he believed contained 200 kilograms of cocaine, and that he took affirmative action to ensure that the vehicle was not searched.

Arango faces a maximum penalty of life in prison, a \$4 million fine or both at sentencing. In determining an actual sentence, Judge Jorgenson will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

The investigation preceding the complaint was conducted by the FBI and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Office of Professional Responsibility. The prosecution is being handled by James T. Lacey, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

CASE NUMBER: CR-05-2033-TUC
RELEASE NUMBER: 2006-221(Arango)

#